Jointly organize a National Workshop
On
**General Semantics as a Human Science**
5-8 October 2014
**Venue**
H. N. B. Garhwal University at Srinagar

**Introduction**

Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences in collaboration with the Department of English, H. N. B. Garhwal University at Srinagar, Uttarakhand will organize a four-day workshop on “General Semantics as a Human Science” during 5-8 October 2014 in the Srinagar campus of the University. The Workshop aims at introducing General Semantics advocated by Alfred Korzybski as a human science to the senior students and teachers across disciplines, mostly in the humanities and social sciences. The Workshop will be organized around readings of some texts by Korzybski and his followers, lectures by the resource persons, and interactive sessions with the participants. The number of participants should not exceed 40.

**Concept Note**

In his two seminal works, *Manhood of Humanity* (1921) and *Science and Sanity* (1933) Korzybski introduced what he called the science of “human engineering” as a new direction to human action and thought after the colossal devastation of First World War, which is now in its centenary year remembered for its profound impact on the human condition. Korzybski did not forge a new discipline; as a scientist and engineer he tried only to develop a scientific method by which he thought he could re-direct human energies toward a brighter and less violent future. He therefore created a hybrid field of knowledge called “general semantics” by drawing resources from various disparate disciplines and synthesizing them under a broad rubric of science of communication. He felt passionately that through creative modes of communication, it should be possible for human beings to bring about a significant change in society for greater good. In order to achieve some success in this direction, one needs to deconstruct certain myths from the past, which have dominated the human mind since the time of Aristotle. One such myth is the “is” of identity, which has a peculiar Aristotelian stance of absolutism. As a first step toward thinking differently, Korzybski therefore recommends a non-Aristotelian method of deconstruction of absolutes. This method involves taking a critical look of how
the verb “is” is implicated in its various usages in our daily expressions in communication. Once we are aware of the psychological damage such usages are likely to cause to our meaning-making activity, we will be doing general semantics. That is why Korzybski lays a great deal of importance to our conscious linguistic behavior. As the past is filtered through our consciousness and is disseminated through language and other signifying gestures, we should be careful “time binders,” which means that instead of being mere slaves to our past we should pass on to future the fruits of our selective inheritance. The strength of general semantics as a human science lies in this vision; its scientific method is premised on the idea that when one tries to be semantically just through a process of creative “abstracting” from the gamut of experiences available, one is likely to succeed in his effort to achieve a less violent society. This is the larger vision of Korzybski; by introducing a series of pragmatic devices he has suggested that if these are applied with certain seriousness in everyday experience the results are likely to be salutary. These devices are: “date,” “index,” “chain-index,” “etcetera” and “quotes and hyphens.” Though appear as simple stylistic devices, they contribute significantly to dispelling misunderstanding and confusion in communication and thereby fostering productive and meaningful relationships.

Resource Persons

The Resource Persons will comprise members of the academic staff of Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences and other invited scholars.

Registration Fee

Each student participant is required to pay Rs.1000/ (Rupees one thousand only). Others will pay Rs.2000/ each (Rupees two thousand only). The fee should be sent through a bank draft payable to Balvant Parekh Centre for General Semantics and Other Human Sciences on a Bank in Baroda. The fee will take care of the cost of reading material, lunch and tea during the workshop. However, the amount does not include the cost of accommodation. Those who need accommodation on the university campus may please contact the local convener. The registration fee should reach Balvant Parekh Centre by September 15, 2014. The outstation participants have to make their own travel arrangements.

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